

Connecticut General Assembly

The Appropriations Committee -- Education Subcommittee

March 3, 2015

Testimony in Support of Long Term Sustainable Funding for All Magnet Schools in Connecticut and in Support of Long Term Sustainable Funding for Student Transportation to All Regional Magnet Schools

*My name is Catherine Young and I live with my daughter in Groton, Connecticut. My daughter is now in 8<sup>th</sup> grade. She graduated from the Regional Multicultural Magnet School (RMMS) in New London. Having attended RMMS from Kindergarten through her 5<sup>th</sup> grade, I could not be more proud of and grateful for the wonderful elementary level education she received at RMMS during these formative years of her life. Let me tell you why.*

*In 2005, I attended a women's day conference at my church in New London when I learned from my church sister about RMMS, the magnet school's mission and its afterschool enrichment programming. She was, and still is, a dedicated teacher at the school. Listening to her stories sparked my excitement in learning that an elementary school experience of this caliber was available to my family right here in Southeastern CT. So, I obtained an enrollment application for kindergarten class starting in the fall of 2006, and then began to pray daily that my daughter's name would be pulled in the lottery. Our prayers were answered with two blessings – one was acceptance to RMMS and the other was a place in the bilingual Spanish-English Immersion classroom for the full six years in the magnet school.*

*The Regional Multicultural Magnet School lived up to its fine reputation and more for my daughter. Just as important to me were the many, meaningful opportunities I had as a single, full time working parent to be involved in my daughter's education. I served on COMPASS, the school's parent advisory committee, because it informed me and I was able to inform, as well as advise others, regarding day to day school matters. It was at RMMS that my daughter made friends in her class with children who reside in East Lyme, Gales Ferry, Ledyard, Mystic, New London, Oakdale, Preston, Uncasville and our home town of Groton. As a result, she had six years of direct exposure to a wide variety of family traditions, cultures, economic resources, religions, languages and views of life. She completed 5<sup>th</sup> grade with a healthy self-respect and a mutual respect for others who are different. And she stays in touch with these friends in 2015 by texting and emailing, though they attend middle school in many other communities including as far away as Costa Rica.*

*Today, my daughter is a solid alumna of the Regional Multicultural Magnet School, Connecticut's first magnet school. She is concluding her middle school years having successfully embraced a new set of school friends who are equally diverse, though in different ways. I credit RMMS with giving her the foundation needed to navigate these challenges. Without reliable bus transportation from Groton and also the Magnet Kingdom after school program, it would have been impossible for my daughter to attend RMMS, because I worked a long week day schedule.*

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*I would be remiss, if I didn't mention one more important aspect of our beloved regional magnet school. It is the student/teacher/administrator/staff ratio. The funding to secure and retain these professionals, in addition to their supplies, and the on-going training they need to teach these young 21<sup>st</sup> century citizens in-the-making, cannot be compromised as we look to the future of Connecticut.*

*It is understandable that you, our State Legislators, have difficult decisions to make during this and the coming years' budget cycles. I urge you to make the right decision with regards to:*

- 1. Fully funding our regional magnet schools which means designating cost of living increases; and*
- 2. Reimbursing magnet school operators with sufficient funding to accommodate bus operations to and from the communities in their service regions.*

*In conclusion, my daughter and I look forward to the possibility of her attending a regional magnet high school soon!*

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